

Sermon for 4/2/2000—*Sermon Series: “How Do I Invite Them?”*—Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Title: “Inviting Friends and Family”

Text: John 4: 28-30, 39-44

Introduction: *Illus.: 1980’s MCI “Friends and Family” Promotion*

Theme: One of the toughest crowds to witness to are those who know you the best. Yet, if we let Christ be our Savior and let that shine in front of them, the Spirit will weave a powerfully convincing case for Jesus and move them to accept his invitation for salvation through you.

What is your passion for your family/friends?

- What the typical person wants for their family and friends—
 - **Happiness**—life goes along smoothly and has reasonable life expectancy
 - **Peacefulness**—translated “harmony”—“*can’t we all just get along*”
 - **Success**— want to have good life, meaning and purpose-filled life for ourselves and loved ones
- But the reality of life is that life in a fallen world isn’t that way and can never be that way
 - **Read Ecclesiastes 2: 4-11**
- Having a passion to share Jesus who alone can give our family/friends a lasting, full life
 - The woman had a passion for family and friends that she dropped everything to show Jesus (vs. 28)
 - **ILLUS.: REASONS WE DON’T WITNESS**
 - “*For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified*”. 1 Cor 2: 2

Keys to witnessing to the people who know you all-too-well

- Be **ENGAGING** in your witness (vs. 29a)
 - The woman had both an **urgency** (come!) and a **simplicity** (see)
 - **ILLUS.: URGENT MESSAGE**
 - A passive witness: Not telling them “*what they should believe*” but telling them “*why you believe*”
- Be **HONEST** with your story (vs. 29b)
 - Not only did Jesus know everything the woman did but so did all of her family and friends
 - **ILLUS.: 1884 GROVER CLEVELAND FOR PRESIDENT—COME CLEAN TO WIN**
 - Self-righteous, looking down your nose at family and friends who don’t yet believe will never win them because in the offense they will find something just as bad in you
 - Witness = **HIS STORY** + **MY STORY** (showing how I did and still do need Jesus’ forgiving grace)
- Be **CONVINCING** by being convinced yourself (vs. 29c, 39)
 - The woman asked a rhetorical question, “*Could this be the Christ?*”
 - The people of the city believed in Jesus “*on account of the word of the woman*”
 - **ILLUS.: A LASTING LEGACY—THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT GRAFFITI**
 - “*For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing...for we are not like many, peddling the word of God. We speak God’s message with sincerity and with Christ’s authority.*” 2 Cor. 2: 15-17
 - Although my testimony is not the inspired Word of God, the Spirit can inspire others to consider Jesus through it

Knowing how to succeed in your witness to family and friends

- Bring them to Jesus and then get out of the way (vss. 40-42)
 - “*And many more believed because of His Word. And they were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”*”
- Don’t take too personally the end result of your efforts (vss. 42-44)
 - Only Jesus can be their “Savior of the world”—you and I can’t be and should take credit for it
 - When the “*home town prophet*” strikes out—realized that Jesus also experienced the same
 - “*Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing in who case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving...but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.* 2 Corinthians 4: 3-4, 7

WITNESSING

Washington -- Graffiti from the 1800s discovered by workers renovating the Washington Monument has quite a different tone from that usually found today on the sides of buildings and subway cars.

"Whoever is the human instrument under God in the conversion of one soul, erects a monument to his own memory more lofty and enduring (sic) than this," reads the inscription which can now be viewed by visitors to the monument.

It is signed BFB. No one knows who that is, or who left the small drawings and 19th century dates on other walls.

The markings in the lobby of the monument were covered over when it was decorated at the turn of the century. They were found when workers removed marble wainscoting as part of a year-long \$500,000 renovation which was just completed.

URGENT MESSAGE

George Sweeting, in his book *The No-Guilt Guide for Witnessing*, tells of a man by the name of John Currier who in 1949 was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Later he was transferred and paroled to work on a farm near Nashville, Tennessee. In 1968, Currier's sentence was terminated, and a letter bearing the good news was sent to him. But John never saw the letter, nor was he told anything about it. Life on that farm was hard and without promise for the future. Yet John kept doing what he was told even after the farmer for whom he worked had died. Ten years went by. Then a state parole officer learned about Currier's plight, found him, and told him that his sentence had been terminated. He was a free man.

Sweeting concluded that story by asking, "Would it matter to you if someone sent you an important message -- the most important in your life -- and year after year the urgent message was never delivered?" We who have heard the good news and experienced freedom through Christ are responsible to proclaim it to others still enslaved by sin. Are we doing all we can to make sure that people get the message?

EVEN AT OUR WORST--CHRIST IS AT HIS BEST

I remember hearing of a man at sea who was very sea-sick. He went to his cabin but succumbed to the motion and had to throw open the port hole and stick his head out the window as he lost his lunch and supper. However, while this man had his head out the window he heard that a man had fallen overboard. He was wondering if he could do anything to help to save him. He laid hold of a light, and held it up on the port-hole. The drowning man was saved. When this man got over his attack of sickness he was up on deck one day, and was talking to the man who was rescued. The saved man shared his story. He said he had gone down the second time, and was just going down again for the last time, when he put out his hand. Just then, he said, some one held a light at the port-hole, and the light fell on his hand. A man caught him by the hand and pulled him into the lifeboat. It seemed a small thing to do to hold up the light; yet it saved the man's life

REASONS WE DON'T WITNESS

A survey was given to those attending training sessions for the Billy Graham crusade in Detroit. One question asked, "What is your greatest hindrance to witnessing?"

None said they didn't really care

9% said they were too busy to remember to do it.

28% felt the lack of real information to share.

12% said their own lives were not speaking as they should.

51 % whose biggest problem was the fear of how the other person would react!